

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 05806 302209Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAA-01 SSM-03 SES-02 ACDA-12 IO-14
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01
/098 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9939
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 05806

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, SY
SUBJECT: SARG INTERPRETATION OF OUR EARLIER DEMARCHE
ON LEBANON AS A THREAT

1. INDIAN AMBASSADOR A. P. VENKATESWARAN INFORMED ME
SEPTEMBER 28 THAT SYRIAN OFFICIALS HAD TOLD HIM THAT
THEY HAD INTERPRETED AN EARLIER USG DEMARCHE I MADE
ON LEBANON AS BEING IN THE FORM OF "A THREAT." THE
INDIAN AMBASSADOR MUST HAVE BEEN REFERRING TO MY CALL
ON MINISTER OF STATE ADI IN MID-AUGUST WHEN, ON THE
DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS, I EXPRESSED OUR CONCERN AT
THE RISK OF ESCALATION OF LEBANESE HOSTILITIES AND THE
IMPLIED DANGER OF AN ISRAELI MILITARY INVOLVEMENT. I
ASKED VENKATESWARAN WHAT THE SYRIANS MEANT BY THE USE
OF THE TERM "THREAT." THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THE
EVIDENT SYRIAN IMPRESSION WAS THAT WE WERE
THREATENING TO UNLEASH ISRAEL IF SYRIANS DIDN'T BEHAVE
IN LEBANON. I ASKED, "WHERE? IN LEBANON OR SYRIA?"
HE SAID, "THIS WAS NOT REPEAT NOT SPECIFIED."

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2. I TOLD VENKATESWARAN THAT THIS WAS AN OBVIOUS
SYRIAN MISINTERPRETATION OF WHAT I HAD SAID, AND
PERHAPS AN INTENTIONAL MISINTERPRETATION. MY PRESEN-
TATION HAD BEEN IN THE FORM OF COUNSELLING RESTRAINT,
HAD BEEN TACTFUL AND THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO EVIDENCE
AT THE TIME THAT THE SYRIANS TOOK IT TO BE A THREAT.
ON THE CONTRARY, THE MINISTER, A BA'THIST, HAD BEEN

CORDIAL, AND AT THE END OF OUR CONVERSATION HAD
EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT WE COULD STAY IN TOUCH.

3. COMMENT: DCM, WHO ACCOMPANIED ME, RECALLS THE MEETING
IN THE SAME VEIN. WHAT THE INDIAN AMBASSADOR'S REPORT
DOES SHOW IS THAT, AS WE HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN, THE
SYRIANS ARE EXCEEDINGLY SENSITIVE TO ANY DEMARCHES ON
OUR PART WHICH SUGGEST THAT WE ARE SPEAKING ON BEHALF
OF ISRAEL OR REFERRING IN SOME WAY TO POSSIBLE
ISRAELI ACTION WHICH MIGHT AFFECT THEM. ADDITIONALLY,
IT INDICATES THAT SOME SARG OFFICIALS ARE WILLING TO
PORTRAY ANY REPRESENTATION INVOLVING ISRAEL AS EVIDENCE
OF US-ISRAELI COMPLICITY. SEELYE

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